

Home affairs

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HOME AFFAIRS.

by PIERRE BÉGUIN.

“The Swiss Army lacks young Officers.”

For some years past, we have been witnessing a somewhat alarming crisis in regard to the recruitment of cadres for the Swiss Army. What we lack are regular officers, that is to say Army instructors. Thus, those who choose the profession of arms — whose role it is to preside over the training of soldiers in the Schools for Recruits — have to do the work of two.

We have an army of militiamen. Our soldiers are ordinary citizens, who give up part of their time to national defence. For this reason, our career officers have always been exceptionally few. The great majority of our cadres, whether it is a question of officers or of N.C.O.s, consist of citizens who have a civilian job or profession, but who have consented to attend relatively lengthy courses, supplemented later on by numerous refresher courses. It is, therefore, these civilians, who are only soldiers exceptionally, who command the greater part of our troops. This is carried out to such a point that one only becomes a regular officer, in an obligatory fashion, when attaining the rank of a Commander of a Division.

As a result of this state of affairs, it often happens that the Instructor Officers are over-worked, and it would really appear necessary to strive to encourage more young men to take up the Army as a career. In order to achieve this, however, their financial situation would, unquestionably, have to be improved. Should this not be done, then, at any rate as long as our economic situation remains as prosperous as it is to-day and as long as it remains easy to find a good job in industry or commerce, the military career bids fair to lack men.

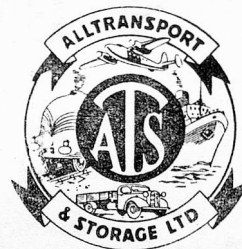
The situation, however, is still more alarming in regard to the Non-commissioned Officers and Officers of the militia itself. The lack of enthusiasm for “getting stripes”, is particularly noticeable in the French and in the Italian-speaking parts of Switzerland. It is in these regions that a certain disaffection in regard to the Army has caused the greatest ravages. It is in the Canton of Vaud that the Chevallier Initiative first saw the light of day and it is within the fold of our linguistic minorities that it has met with the greatest success. However, the phenomenon is general and manifestations of it, in varying degrees, are to be met with throughout the country.

What is the reason for this evolution? Viewed

from a certain standpoint, it would appear to be paradoxical. Even if our periods of military service — the Schools for Recruits, as well as the Schools for officer cadres — are longer by a good half than they were some twenty years' ago, the time given up for national defence is now remunerated much more generously by payments made by the State. At the beginning of the last War, we introduced the system of Compensation Funds, whereby the soldiers and the officers are indemnified for losses incurred in regard to wages, salaries or profits, as a result of their being with the Colours. Unfortunately, this act of justice has not had the results that were hoped for; recruitment for officer cadres continues to meet with serious difficulties.

The real reason for this evolution is to be found elsewhere. It comes from our prosperity. The struggle for life has become more severe. Everyone is in a far greater hurry than was the case formerly, to find himself a good, steady job in the national economy. It often happens that preference will be given by the management of a firm to a citizen, who is available because he need not be absent for the purpose of attending long courses in order to obtain officer's rank, and then further promotion. There is too much work to be done, and this work will not bear any slowing down. To all this, must be added the fact that the farmers are now much less inclined to become N.C.O.s or officers, since the cavalry has been almost entirely suppressed, in order to make place for the new techniques. This state of mind is very noticeable in the French-speaking countryside.

Interrogated on this subject, the other day, at

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the Council of States, and asked what means could be taken to remedy this situation, Mr. Paul Chaudet, the Head of the Federal Military Department, spoke of the two principal measures which are to be proposed, or even taken, very shortly; on the one hand, better pay for the N.C.O. pupils, and on the other hand, a reform which will make it possible to choose the future N.C.O.s after four or six weeks of training, and not, as formerly, only at the end of the School for Recruits. Those chosen would be detached from their comrades and trained for their job as N.C.O.s, partly during the School for Recruits, which would make it possible to cut down the length of time for the subsequent special courses. It is to be hoped that these measures will be realised very soon. This is a matter affecting the soundness and efficacy of our Army.

* * *

The Rights and Duties of Active Neutrality.

A proposal was put forward, recently, on a diplomatic plane, for the establishment of a "world atomic agency", to which no fewer than eighty countries would belong. This proposal is to be discussed next autumn, during the General Assembly of the United Nations Organisation.

Right from the start, the authors of this project have stated that this institution should have its seat in a neutral country. And, already one hears names mentioned: Stockholm, Vienna, Brussels and finally, Geneva. This means that our country will have to make up its mind as to whether it would accept to

prefer hospitality to this seat, in case it were asked to do so.

Already questions are being put forward, in our Press. As always happens on similar occasions, one finds that two different camps are being formed: that of the traditionalists, who fear that Swiss neutrality would be compromised by the presence on our territory of an institution based on international collaboration, and that of the innovators, who think that we should go beyond a strictly passive neutrality, and participate more and more in schemes for world co-operation.

Of course, all debate on this subject is premature. But, it is permissible to make some remarks on it which, perhaps, may not lack in interest.

Right from the very first it must be made quite clear that Switzerland remains faithful to her status of neutrality. She firmly intends to refuse to be bound up with any international organisation which might possess the character of an alliance or of a coalition. There can be no question of her national defence, in any of its aspects, being connected with the national defence of other countries. On this plane, which is both political and military, it may be affirmed that our country would not even come into discussion.

However strict may be this principle which pre-vides over the whole of our external policy, it must be admitted that our policy of neutrality has evolved considerably since the end of the Second World War. Our Minister for Foreign Affairs has never ceased from repeating the formula of "neutrality and solidarity". He has exerted himself, with the support of his colleagues in the Government, the two legislative Chambers and Public Opinion, to get our country to collaborate with all those international organisations which ensure a technical, economic and monetary co-operation between all the countries which surround us and even all the countries in the world. In this respect we are now less reticent than in the past, and we are more ready to take risks. A proof of this is to be found in our participation in the Armistic Commission in Korea.

This means that if Switzerland were to be asked to grant hospitality to the future world atomic agency, she would not reply automatically by an estoppel. What would be incumbent upon her would be to establish, first of all, the true character of this institution and to find out what are its duties and aims. Should this agency be connected in the slightest way with a military alliance or a political coalition, its

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presence on Swiss soil would be impossible. If, on the contrary, it is to be an instrument of international co-operation, and, especially, of peaceful co-operation, it may be anticipated that it will be given a warm welcome. In other words: the more universal this organisation proves to be, the greater the number of countries that it succeeds in grouping together, the better we will be able to work with it, hand in hand.

Indeed, it is not merely a question of Switzerland offering hospitality eventually to a world institution. It is also a question of not remaining aloof from the efforts undertaken to promote and to control the utilisation of nuclear energy. In this domain, we cannot achieve anything very much through our own efforts. We are called upon to collaborate with others. And that is why, in this domain, as well as in many others, our neutrality can no longer be passive, but owes it to itself to become more and more active and positive.

* * *

It was announced recently that, in accordance with a decision taken by the Federal Council, the next Swiss National Exhibition, which is to take place in 1964, will be held in Lausanne. It was really quite natural that, this time, the seat of this important display should be in the French-speaking part of Switzerland. The two last Exhibitions were held in Berne and in Zurich, and one has to go back as far as 1896 in order to find an Exhibition being organised in the French-speaking regions, that is to say, in Geneva. This decision has given particular pleasure to the Lausannois and the Vaudois, as they were very disappointed last year, when they were refused the task of organising the Olympic Games.

Lausanne is both well-placed and well-equipped for the job of arranging a National Exhibition. The situation of the town is very favourable for such a task, and will no doubt contribute towards the success of this undertaking. Moreover, it possesses in the Comptoir Suisse, some magnificent buildings which can be incorporated in the Exhibition and which will render a valuable service.

Of course, no comparison exists between the Comptoir Suisse and a National Exhibition. The Comptoir is an Autumn Fair, where the industry and agriculture of the country offer their products for sale. Its purpose is to make known our agricultural machines as well as our wines, household articles as well as the latest creations of Fashion. This Autumn Fair is very useful to us for our domestic trade, whereas the Swiss Industries Fair, in Basle, serves, every Spring, the purpose of intensifying our trade with abroad. These two Fairs complement each other most satisfactorily.

The Swiss National Exhibition possesses a much more extensive aim. Nothing is sold there. It does not serve particular interests, but the general interests of the country. In point of fact, it draws up, each quarter of a century, the balance of our national activities. It is there, at the time when the Exhibition is on, that there takes place an inventory of the effort made by the country, in the private branch of industry, as well as in the domain of the State, and this, in regard to material activities and to the life of the arts and of the spirit. Thus, it makes it possible for us to realise what we really are, what we are worth and what we have accomplished. It is good for such an

examination of conscience to take place every twenty-five years.

Should anyone question the usefulness of this big display, he should be reminded of the eminent role played in 1939, by the National Exhibition in Zurich. Opened on the eve of the Second World War, it remained, until the Autumn of that sad year, a place to which all the Swiss came in order to keep up their reasons for hope. Our country found in it, the proof that it had accomplished great things, in every sphere of activity. And, during those dangerous years, the people understood better that this country deserved to be defended. It may therefore be affirmed that the moral and psychological conditions under which we faced the difficulties — economic, political and spiritual — of the great world conflict, had been definitely improved, if not partially created, by the enormous success of the 1939 Exhibition, in Zurich.

The 1964 National Exhibition, in Lausanne, may render us services of the same kind. There is a great deal of talk, at the present time, about the "malaise" in the French-speaking regions of Switzerland, about military fatigue, about disaffection in regard to the democratic régime and about the attraction felt for certain foreign régimes. We may find the cure for this in the National Exhibition, if this is well conceived and if its organisers do not lose sight of its true aim, which is, that it will not suffice to merely draw up an inventory of what we have accomplished, but that it is of paramount importance to draw up an inventory of our possibilities and of solutions pertaining to the future.

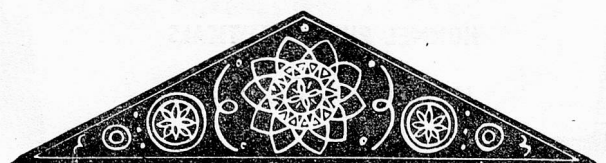
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HOME AFFAIRS.

by MAX NEF.

In view of the increase in prices and wages, that is to be observed, for some time past, in our country also, the Federal Council engaged in some talks, a few weeks ago, with the leading economic associations, in order to examine the possibilities for suitable counter measures.

Although, when compared with other countries, the rise in prices and wages, in Switzerland, only takes place slowly and has nothing alarming about it, nevertheless, it must be admitted that after a period of practical stability which lasted for about two years, an upward trend has now set in again. The Federal Council, in collaboration with the Swiss National Bank and other institutions, has been following this development very carefully and has now decided to intervene. No drastic measures, however, are to be expected. Economic conditions in Switzerland are very well balanced and, anyway, the Government does not go in for economic experiments of any kind, so that even if some modifications are introduced in respect of former regulations, no spectacular measures are to be anticipated, nor are they even possible.

In view of the fact that Swiss economy is governed by liberal principles, the Authorities possess very few legal pretexts for intervening in the process of development. Other countries often try to stem the rise in prices by means of drastic reductions in Customs duties. Such a procedure, however, does not come into question for Switzerland, as her Customs rates are already very low, and any further decrease would practically be impossible, nor would it be effective.

One way, which might very well prove successful in keeping down prices and wages to a reasonable level in Switzerland, consists in an appeal made to the employers, the workers, trade, the consumers and their organisations, to conduct themselves reasonably, of their own free will. The Federal Council decided to choose this way and invited the employers and the workers — separately, to start with — to discuss the matter in question.

On this occasion, the standpoint of the Authorities was first of all made known and then discussed. It was with great satisfaction that the Federal Council found both the groups, whose interests do not always

run in quite the same direction, ready and willing to co-operate and to tackle the solution of this problem together. When a similar situation occurred in 1947, a so-called Stabilisation Agreement was concluded, which precluded any further claims for higher prices or wages. No such action is intended, this time. An attempt will be made, inter alia, to check orders in the building trade, although this will prove more difficult now, than it was, at the time of the corresponding action taken in 1947. This, because the restrictions imposed previously, led to a demand for building which, to-day, can no longer be restrained. This applies more especially to the building of school-houses, which in consequence of a high birth rate during the intervening years, and the increased number of children now approaching school years, can no longer be postponed. There are also new hospitals that must be built without delay. And, in addition to all this, industry and transport also require new buildings, as a result of the rapid technical development which is taking place.

However, by means of planning in common for the future, in which all the interested parties will participate and by means — more especially — of a systematic staggering of the various requirements, in accordance with their urgency, a great deal will already have been accomplished. It was in order to achieve this that the Federal Council arranged the discussions with the representatives of the country's economy, discussions which are to be pursued further.

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and then the Middle East. The Federal Council deplores the fact that only those countries which are members of the UNO can belong to the Committee for Technical Assistance, which draws up the programmes and directs their execution. Switzerland hopes that this Committee will soon be open to all those States which participate in the common task.

As regards the bi-lateral assistance, this was started in 1950, but, at that time, all it meant for us was to send experts. Since 1952, we have also received foundation scholars here, and these two forms of assistance have no longer been realised through the intermediary of the UNO, but as a result of direct pourparlers between Switzerland and various economically backward countries. Taken as a whole, these experiments have proved successful. By quintupling our appropriations for bi-lateral assistance, we will be able to increase the number of scholarships. Up to the present, we have concentrated only on one Continent — Asia. The Federal Council proposes that our assistance should be extended to Africa and to South America.

Whilst the idea of technical aid to under-developed countries is progressing in the world, in general, the Federal Council suggests that we should increase by 82 per cent the credits affected by us to this scheme. The Federal Council is perfectly right. Even so our public contribution will remain a modest one, not only in ratio to the requirements, which are immense, but also to the effort made by other countries in this direction.

We should not, therefore, remain satisfied with what is being done by the State. Already, various private associations in Switzerland are occupying themselves with aid to those countries which need it. A Committee was constituted recently, in Berne, for the purpose of studying the best ways of co-ordinating the efforts already started, and of obtaining a far more considerable effort from our population. The target set amounts to some fifty million Swiss francs."

You have just read an article published in the "Tribune de Genève", regarding Swiss technical aid to backward countries.

HOME AFFAIRS.

by DR. ADANK.

"Swiss Technical Aid for Economically Backward Countries".

The Federal Council is asking for 900 thousand more francs for technical aid to economically under-developed countries. This assistance is given by us, in two ways: Firstly, by means of subsidies to the United Nations, several of whose Special Agencies are occupied with this work, and, secondly, by dealing directly with the under-developed countries. This is what the Bernese correspondent of the "Tribune de Genève" writes on this subject:

"During these last few years we have been contributing a million francs per annum towards such technical aid. The Federal Council now proposes to raise this sum to one and a half million francs, 85 per cent of which would be ear-marked for the remuneration of the Swiss experts, for the upkeep of foundation scholars in our country and for the purchase of Swiss materials.

As for our programme of bi-lateral assistance, this has been on a very modest scale: only 100,000 francs per year, when nearly 40,000 are necessary for the purpose of financing the sending and the maintenance of one, sole expert in an under-developed country.

It must be admitted that, up to the present, we have not done very much and the Federal Council is quite right in suggesting that a greater effort be made, although still on a modest scale. The money paid in by the Confederation has, moreover, benefitted certain of our compatriotes: last year, the United Nations bought from us, for various schemes of technical assistance, both material and instruments, for which 300,000 francs were paid.

At the beginning of this year, the total number of Swiss missions amounted to 124. On the other hand, a great many foundation scholars of the United Nations came to study in Switzerland. Up to the present there have been 440 such scholars. What is the purpose of these experts, why are these scholars received here, and what use is made of our money? The Federal Council has replied to these questions by recalling the five aims of the programme for technical assistance, which the United Nations are so anxious to realise:

1) To study the possibilities offered by the still unexplored natural resources; 2) To obtain a better output from the resources already exploited; 3) To use with greater efficaciousness the plant and equipment already available; 4) To develop the manpower potential, the principal resource of under-developed countries; 5) To improve the administrative machinery charged with the task of formulating and executing development plans.

Seventy-three countries are participating in this effort, the cost of which will amount this year to nearly 30 million dollars. Some hundred countries, spread over the five Continents, will be the beneficiaries. It is in the Far East that the greatest work is being achieved. Next comes South America,

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